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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
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AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 08814

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UR](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: (C) DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAN: A SOVIET VIEW

REF: MOSCOW 08415

[1](#)1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT.)

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SUMMARY

[1](#)2. A WELL-INFORMED SOVIET OBSERVER OF EVENTS IN IRAN RECENTLY DISCUSSED WITH US THE UNCERTAINTIES SURROUNDING FUTURE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN TEHRAN. WHILE ASSERTING THAT SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH IRAN WOULD CONTINUE, OUR INTERLOCUTOR CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT THERE IS NO CONSENSUS IN MOSCOW ON THE LIKELY SUCCESS OF SUCH EFFORTS. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. EMBOFF RECENTLY HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAN WITH THE DIRECTOR OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE'S DEPARTMENT FOR AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, IRAN, AND TURKEY, YURIY GANKOVSKIY (PROTECT). WHILE GANKOVSKIY IS NOT A POLICY-MAKER, HE IS ONE OF THE BEST INFORMED AND MOST THOUGHTFUL SOVIET ANALYSTS ON IRAN, AS WELL AS A REPUTED MFA ADVISER.

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[1](#)4. IRAN/IRAQ WAR: GANKOVSKIY WITHOUT PROMPTING VOLUNTEER-ED THAT IRAN WAS CLEARLY RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTINUATION OF THE WAR. HE ASSERTED THAT THE SAUDIS AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES WERE READY TO MEET IRANIAN DEMANDS FOR CASH PAYMENTS TO OFFSET WAR DAMAGES. HOWEVER, GANKOVSKIY SAW LITTLE PROSPECT FOR AN END TO THE WAR BECAUSE THE AUTHORITIES IN TEHRAN REMAIN DETERMINED TO BRING DOWN SADDAM HUSAYN.

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[1](#)5. FUTURE POLITICAL PROSPECTS IN IRAN: GANKOVSKIY DISCOUNTED A BID BY THE IRANIAN MILITARY EITHER TO OVERTHROW KHOMEINI OR TAKE POWER FOLLOWING HIS DEATH. HE ATTRIBUTED THE MILITARY'S RELUCTANCE TO MAKE A BID FOR POWER TO THE OFFICER CORPS' PREOCCUPATION WITH THE WAR, THE STRENGTH OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS, AND THE DECIMATION OF THE IRANIAN MILITARY'S BEST OFFICERS IN SUCCESSIVE WAVES OF REPRESSION. GANKOVSKIY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE REPRESSION HAD TAKEN A HEAVY TOLL AMONG THE "LEFT" OPPOSITION, WHICH WAS FURTHER WEAKENED BY LACK OF UNITY. HE CONCLUDED THAT, EVEN AFTER KHOMEINI'S DEATH, THERE WOULD BE "NO SOLUTION ON THE LEFT" FOR IRAN. INTERESTINGLY, GANKOVSKIY WOULD NOT RULE OUT A COMEBACK BY THE WESTERN-ORIENTED IRANIAN "BOURGEOISIE." WHILE THEY WERE IN EXILE NOW, IRAN HAD A LONG HISTORY OF EXILES WHO HAD MADE STARTLING POLITICAL COMEBACKS. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, GANKOVSKIY SAID THAT KHOMEINI'S SUCCESSOR WOULD MOST LIKELY COME FROM AMONG THOSE POLITICAL FIGURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CURRENT REGIME AND THAT RAFSANJANI SEEMED THE BEST BET FOR THE PRESENT.

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[1](#)6. EMBOFF ASKED GANKOVSKIY WHETHER THERE WERE NOT TWO BROAD LINES IN SOVIET THINKING ABOUT RELATIONS WITH IRAN. SOME SOVIETS SEEMED TO ADVOCATE A SERIOUS EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE CURRENT REGIME, WHILE OTHERS SEEMED DEEPLY SKEPTICAL THAT EFFORTS TO COOPERATE WITH

THE TEHRAN AUTHORITIES WOULD SERVE SOVIET INTERESTS (REF-TEL). GANKOVSKIY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WERE NOT TWO LINES, BUT "TWENTY LINES" IN SOVIET THINKING ABOUT IRAN. DESPITE THESE DIFFERENCES IN OPINION, HOWEVER, THE SOVIET UNION HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO TRY TO WORK OUT A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH A COUNTRY WITH WHICH IT SHARED A LONG BORDER.

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17. COMMENT: WHILE MUCH OF WHAT GANKOVSKIY HAD TO SAY IS STANDARD, HIS COMMENTS SUGGEST CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY AMONG KNOWLEDGEABLE SOVIETS ABOUT IRAN'S LONG-TERM COURSE. WHILE HE WAS CAREFUL TO ASSERT SOVIET INTEREST IN IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH IRAN, GANKOVSKIY CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT THERE IS NO CONSENSUS AMONG SOVIET ANALYSTS ABOUT THE LIKELY SUCCESS OF SUCH AN EFFORT.

HARTMAN